

Workplace Traffic Safety

This is Road-Safe Workplace, an electronic newsletter about workplace traffic safety from the Vermont Department of Labor because the number one cause of death and injury in the workplace are traffic crashes. Road-Safe Workplace has been created to distribute statistics, facts, and other materials to help employers create, maintain and improve their workplace traffic safety programs. Please use this information in your company newsletters, bulletin boards, or employee e-mail memos. Your thoughts and comments are always welcome. However, if you do not wish to receive Road-Safe Workplace, please reply with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line.



School is Out This Month – Kids Will Be In (and on) The Road

Enough Said!

– or, is it?

Do we all need to be reminded that traffic crashes are the leading cause of teen death? Do we all need to be reminded that traffic crashes are the leading cause of death in the workplace? Do we all need to be reminded that life is precious (see the last story in this issue)?

2006 National Firefighter Stand Down, Everyone Comes Home

(The following is reprinted with permission of the Vermont State Fire Marshall's Office. Sometimes what appears to be obvious is not so obvious. A firefighters duty is not only related to saving lives and property, but as you will read, it also deals with the road-safe safety of the firefighter.)

Approximately 25% of firefighter line-of-duty deaths is a result of vehicle-related incidents. Starting June 21, fire departments, volunteer and career, are asked to suspend any non-emergency activity and **focus instead on firefighter safety**, especially vehicle safety. This will continue until all personnel and duty nights have been covered, This includes everyone that responds to emergencies fire, EMS, Haz Mat response team, ARFF, wildland fire personnel, to name a few.

Some of the topics recommended for your discussion should include seatbelts, driving and backing, vehicle checkout, operation and traffic control issues. If you don't already have a policy for these safety concerns, then this would be an excellent time to write them. If your department has written policies everyone on the department should have knowledge of what the safety procedures are and the expectations for enforcement. These policies should include training

requirements for apparatus operator certifications, and re-certifications, when seatbelts are required, driving record issues, what is acceptable driving habits as they relate to State laws, what responsibilities the supervisor has when riding in the officers seat.

There are many other issues you can discuss during this year's stand down as well. For more information on National Stand Down visit these web sites: www.iafc.org/standdown, www.iaff.org, www.EMSCloseCalls.com, www.EveryoneGoesHome.com.

Fatigue Is Most Common Distraction While Driving

Eight out of 10 motor vehicle crashes involve a distraction, according to new study results from NHTSA and Virginia Tech Transportation Institute. One of the most common distractions was falling asleep at the wheel. This is a message to shift workers and their companies that falling asleep behind the wheel can prove to be dangerous or fatal. One way to help your employees and protect your company is to provide a place where a sleepy person can nap before driving home. Only a few people are likely to use it, but it could provide a lifesaving intervention for someone who had a bad shift and was really struggling to stay awake.

Rising Gas Prices Effect Employees' Wallets

Drivers are paying \$2.919 on average for a gallon of regular gas, up 30% from 10 weeks ago. This is impacting employees who drive long distances and is creating problems for fleets and livery firms. Gas tabs are coming from employees' pockets if the company is paying the government reimbursable rate of 44.5 cents per mile. That government rate has not been raised since the start of recent increases. For more information, visit http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2006-05-01-biz-%20trav-gas-usat_x.htm

Vermont Moves Forward on SHSP

An inter-agency planning group is moving steadily toward the creation of a Strategic Highway Safety Plan for Vermont. Comprised of representatives from several state agencies and departments, the group has identified several areas of concern and targeted a select number of specific issues for remedial action. The plan, mandated by Federal law focuses on the four E's (Engineering, Education, Enforcement and Emergency Services) as well as a subset of emphasis areas. These include: Driver Inattention, Keeping Vehicles on the Roadway, Intersection Crashes, Drivers under age 21, Increasing Seat Belt Usage, Reducing Impaired Driving, and Curbing Aggressive Driving. A draft of the plan will go to an executive group comprised of agency & department heads by October. The Federal Highway Administration will also review the draft before it is presented to Governor James for his approval. The objective of the plan is to identify and remove impediments to safe driving on Vermont's highways.

Traffic Safety IS Important Because Life IS Precious

*(This story is an unusual contribution to the **Project Road-Safe Newsletter**, but it strikes at the very heart of the issue of workplace traffic safety. I hope you share this with all your employees. It might give some folks food for thought when they travel home after "a long day at the office.")*

Jack took a long look at his speedometer before slowing down. "Wow," he said out loud, "73 in a 55 zone. The fourth time in as months. How could a guy get caught so often?" When his car had slowed to 10 miles an hour, Jack pulled over, but only partially.

Let the cop worry about the potential traffic hazard, Jack thought. Maybe some other car will tweak his backside with a mirror. The cop was stepping out of his car now, the big pad in his hand. Jack looked in his rear view mirror. "Bob? Bob from Church!?"

This was worse than the coming ticket, Jack thought as he sunk farther into his trench coat. Imagine, stopped by a cop from his own church! Stopping a guy who happened to be a little eager to get home after a long day at the office. Stopped by a guy he was about to play golf with tomorrow. Jumping out of his car, Jack approached a man he saw every Sunday, but a man he had never seen in uniform.

"Hi, Bob. Fancy meeting you like this," Jack smiled.

"Hello, Jack." No smile.

"Guess you caught me red-handed in a rush to see my wife and kids."

"Yeah, I guess." Bob seemed uncertain.

"I've seen some long days at the office lately. I'm afraid I bent the rules a bit—just this once." Jack toed at a pebble on the pavement. "Diane said something about roast beef and potatoes tonight. Know what I mean?"

"I know what you mean," Bob responded. "I also know you have a reputation in our precinct."

Ouch! This was not going in the right direction, Jack thought. Time to change tactics. "What did you clock me at?" asked Jack.

"Seventy," Bob said evenly. "Would you sit back in your car, please?"

"Now wait a minute here, Bob. I checked as soon as I saw you. I was barely nudging 65." The lie seemed to come easier with every ticket.

"Please, Jack, in the car."

Flustered, Jack hunched himself through the still-open door. Slamming it shut, he stared at the dashboard. He was in no rush to open the window. The minutes ticked by. Bob scribbled away on the pad. Why hadn't he asked for a driver's license, wondered Jack.

Well, whatever the reason, it would be a month of Sundays before I ever sat near this cop again, scowled Jack. A tap on the door jerked his head to the left. There was Bob, a folded paper in his hand. Jack rolled down the window a mere two inches, just enough room for Bob to pass him the slip of paper.

"Thanks." Jack could not quite keep the sneer out of his voice.

Bob returned to his police car without a word. Jack watched his retreat in the mirror. Jack unfolded the sheet of paper. How much was this one going to cost? Wait a minute!! What was this!? Some kind of joke!? It's certainly not a ticket! Jack began to read:

"Dear Jack,

Once upon a time I had a daughter. She was only six when she was killed by a car. You guessed it – a speeding driver. A fine and three months in jail, and the man was free. Free to hug his daughters – all three of them. I only had one little girl, and I'm going to have to wait until I get to Heaven before I can ever hug her again. Be careful, Jack. My son is all I have left.

Bob"

Jack turned around in time to see Bob's car pull away and head down the road. Jack watched until it disappeared. A full 15 minutes later, he, too, pulled away and drove home, well within the speed limit, where he hugged a surprised wife and kids on his arrival.

Life is precious. Handle it with care. This is an important message; please pass it along. Drive safely and carefully. Someone's life depends on it.

Employer Guidebook to Reduce Traffic Crashes

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) have joined forces to create the 32-page ***Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes***, featuring a 10-step program outlining what an employer can do to improve traffic safety performance and minimize the risk of motor vehicle crashes. The document includes success stories from employers who have benefited from effective driver safety programs, including Pike Industries with operations in Vermont. The booklet is available to employers from:

njames@labor.state.vt.us. Ask for the Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes. Be sure to include your mailing address.

Inattention, speed, driving while impaired, disregard for stop signs and traffic lights, and failure to yield the right of way are the major causes of crashes on our highways.



**REMEMBER -- BUCKLE YOUR SEATBELT
EVERY TIME!**